



Houston Community Conversation Summary February 8, 2018

Host(s): Lawrence Allen and Donna Bahorich

Participant Description: Approximately 85 participants

The State Board of Education (SBOE), under Texas law, is required to adopt a Long-Range Plan for Public Education. The 18-member steering committee, which is made up of state board members, various stakeholder group representatives and representatives from three state agencies, is leading the process. The steering committee will recommend long-term goals for Texas schools and will identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges of the system.

To help the board gather public input that will shape the new plan and set long-term goals through the year 2030, community conversations are being held around the state. In each community conversation, participants identify the purpose or desired outcome of public education and give feedback on challenges, strengths, and opportunities in four topics: educator preparation, recruitment, and retention; equity and access; family engagement and empowerment; and student engagement and empowerment.

This document provides a snapshot of the data collected during the Houston community conversation and highlights the main concepts captured during small-group conversations. Staff members from the Texas Comprehensive Center at the American Institutes for Research facilitated the community conversations and prepared this summary.

To learn more about the development of the Texas State Board of Education's work on the Long-Range Plan, visit https://tea.texas.gov/SBOE/long-range_plan/.



What is the purpose or desired outcome of public education?

- 21st century learners with STEM skills.
- Ability to apply knowledge to real world goals and purposes.
- Be effective communicators.
- Develop world citizens who are critical thinkers, innovators, and problem solvers.
- Ensure all children have a quality education for long-term benefits of our nation.
- Ensure equal opportunity for every student that crosses our district and provide equitable opportunity for every kid for learning at high level.
- Equip students to be successful in life and provide a foundation and create lifelong learners.
- Good, productive, educated citizens who are prepared for the adult world and know how to teach themselves what they need to know in adulthood.
- Have grit, perseverance, tenacity.
- Help children find/pursue their passions.
- Not only focusing on academics but also focusing on soft skills such as leadership, problem solving skills, communications and negotiations.
- Outcome – produce productive and informed citizens and engaged in decision making as a community.
- Prepare children with tools to succeed in their life path and to facilitate and foster a continuing love of learning.
- Prepare individuals to be effective in democratic society through communication, problem solving and critical thinking, where diverse voices are celebrated.
- Prepare our youth to become productive citizens and propel themselves to their future choice.
- Produce access for all students to have education – regardless of race, income, religion.
- Provide educational foundation that allows students to become productive, tax-paying citizens.
- Provide free and equal education to all students. Provide a safe environment.
- Public education should help develop and recognize strengths and talents of students.
- Public education should prepare students with disabilities for independent lives, including higher education.
- Support our students for their full development, including culture, after school, clubs, athletics, etc.
- Teach students to be innovative and problem solvers.
- To be a productive member of society.
- To be able to live and work with people, be part of the community.
- To be able to problem-solve and work collaboratively with others with confidence.
- To be productive citizens to participate in our democracy and our society.
- To develop the whole child – emotional, academic, physical, and social (civic minded).
- To prepare kids for the next step in their life – be it college, technical school, military, community college.



Educator Preparation, Recruitment, and Retention

Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alternative certification prep – inadequate and low retention.• Counselors need national standards. Decentralized model of counseling, needs similar requirements, counsel to student.• Disability education – conflict with teachers trained and how executed. General ed. teachers don't know what to do but the law requires them in general ed. G/T require extra education but state doesn't require any education for special ed.• Education prep courses are not in line with what is needed to be educators.• Funding, paying teachers.• Leadership prep not up to par either. No prep for them to understand how to communicate with staff.• Learning culture of district.• Marketing for education, teacher pay.• Must have a leadership pipeline where teachers are rewarded as Master Teachers and they do not have to earn more by being promoted to AP, principal, etc. Reward teachers for being Masters at their craft.• Need for more and earlier field experiences. They need to be more scaffolding.• Not intentional with growing and developing teachers who enter the profession.• Overwhelming teachers with testing, so many initiatives. Testing have transformed the art of teaching for kids.• Percent of college students interested in teaching declining.• Retention – high-quality people tend to leave the job for corporate jobs. How can we be competitive?• Smaller classes to work with students of range of needs.• Standardized testing reduces effectiveness of good teaching.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• District of innovation.• Educators have passion and they want to make a difference with kids.• Greater exposure (e.g., field work for education majors starting in sophomore year) leads to greater retention.• Grow your own.• HEB Leadership – private/business partnerships are used more, getting more teachers in the pipeline.• In one district, students participate in a teacher preparation program to introduce them to the teaching profession.• Mentor programs – sending teachers into challenging schools.• Texas recruits from all over, e.g. Iowa. Willingness to recruit from all over.

<p>Opportunities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative certification program needs to be continued and advertised/marketed. (Approach in EPP.) • Baby boomers...next generation of potential teachers. • Creating partnerships between EPPs and schools. • Creating research-practice partnerships to be able to make data-derived decisions. • Development of exit strategies for teachers who are not effective (ease the requirement of removing teachers). • Diversity – accept differences and address needs of learners; support educators in dealing with these needs. • For counselors, more college and career advice (solution based, practical). • Getting useful field experiences. • Market personal satisfaction rather than salary. • Partnership with corporate America – specialized content areas. • Preparation: Getting teacher candidates into classes early – variety of settings (rural, urban, suburban). • Professional development – mentors for all new teachers (live, in-classroom observation and coaching – ongoing). • Provide adequate support for teachers (social services, mental health, etc.). • Provide buddy system for first-year teachers and experienced teachers. • Provision of strong mentors for teachers, counselors, librarians. • Recruit from businesses. • Recruitment to EPP has to be appealing and innovative. • Require teachers receive training in relationships.
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Equity and Access

Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Challenge to put new technology in old guidelines that are not able to support new technology.• Cultural bias – socioeconomic bias.• Defining what equity and access mean, ensuring existence of equity.• Early education is crucial for access and equity – 90% of kids that are ready by first grade will be on grade level throughout their school years. ISDs should support early education – more of a problem in brown/black neighborhoods.• Family structure or support (advocates) to ensure kids get exposure or access to social/emotional support.• Financial system of inequitable distribution.• Funding for schools is inequitable. Property values should not dictate funding. Zip code has major impact on education and healthcare. Separate school funding from property taxes.• Hiring practices – attention to diversity in classroom teachers and administrators.• Lower expectations of kids of color and kids in poverty.• Not all school districts have easy/cheap access to dual credit courses. Some school districts do not have a partnership with a community college nearby, so transportation is a challenge.• Poorer school districts need more technology but are not prepared for the equipment when it arrives as it is typically lower quality and out of date soon after. It is not as durable as what more affluent districts can afford.• School choice has been working ironically against equity, because those who can't get to participate are left with the absolute worst.• State needs to find equitable sources for funding – recapture unfair.• Students in poorer districts are disadvantaged because teachers opt for “better” schools because the pay is the same in rich and poor districts.• Technology changes so frequently that revenue is slow to trickle down, which contributes to inequity.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A lot of schools are learning at higher levels and good pockets of innovators.• Advanced course options, i.e., 6th grade students have the option to take 6th, 7th, and 8th grade math in 6th grade! Earn high school credit in intermediate.• Availability for fiscal support of higher education.• Districts paying for AP test courses.• Early college high school programs.• Efforts are being made to bridge the gaps.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good conversations around reforming, wrap around services, choice/charter schools. • Parents know to ask for more things, they are more knowledgeable. • Partnerships. • Students have more options, less cookie-cutter education choices. • Working toward and recognizing the need for the same services, facilities, education.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative relationships among PTOs at different campuses. • Commission on public education and school finance – influence them to separate school funding from property taxes. • Districts partnering with day care centers. • Improved use of research to help prepare educators. • More opportunities to work with higher education boards. • Professional development that allows teachers and staff to have conversation about the achievement gap. • State could pay internet bills for school districts, so that lower income students have more access to the internet. • Technology expansion that allows for partnerships. • Utilize all resources and utilize community planning meetings to discuss barriers/strengths in education (this meeting).



Family Engagement and Empowerment	
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication between parents and teachers. • Educators not educated in the skills needed to build relationships. • Language barriers (not just Spanish). • Language differences, educators speak in a way that is not identifiable by parents. • Listen to parents, but don't take action. • Not taking into account barriers (time of meeting, language). • Parent engagement is NOT part of the school purpose. • Parental education – No regular/standardized parent education, understanding of the education system. Are there overviews of the different offerings of the school? (Counselor? Advocate?) • Parents in poverty sometimes feel pressed to defer to educators. • Some parents do not have access to the technology needed.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do have a lot of educators who are willing to think outside the box. • Hold events to showcase accomplishments and invite parents and grandparents. • Math/literacy night somewhat beneficial. • Social media has created a touchpoint to engage with parents. • Weekly newsletter (can be very brief) from school and one from teachers.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All signage in English and Spanish. • Dedicate a staff member to focus on parent engagement (put the money there). • Gather more feedback from parents, ask questions. • Have an acronym glossary for education acronyms – like “TEKS” – handed out at every school meeting. • Have inter-generational teaching (students teaching the adults). • Have parents that speak second language interspersed throughout room when school meetings happen. • Make school a safe place for parents to come. Educators do not judge parents. • Online resources that are “live” and updated weekly with lesson examples and/or videos. • Sharing data on math of education with parents to get them on board with learning (e.g., post grad + 2 years trade, you will make x more \$ per year in money). • Use parent advocate as a resource to help within the school system.



Student Engagement and Empowerment	
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foster kids don't receive enough support for school stability and transfer of record and credit. • Insufficient exposure to creative learning and interdisciplinary education. • Lack of development of business, technology, and problem-solving skills. • Lost connection between real life and curriculum. • Lost interest in learning. • Mindset and perspective of students – I can only achieve...I have bad test scores, so I must be stupid. My test score equates my self-worth. • Not all students are empowered by knowing they can choose their endorsement and can change. • Over-policing and bullying discourage school engagement. • Receiving special education label, then receiving services, ignoring IEPs. • Representation matters: having teachers that look like their students, need bilingual teachers. • Social-emotional learning. • Too many students don't receive adequate pre-school and early education. Start school behind. • We are failing to properly identify and remediate learning differences like dyslexia.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Athletics. • Certifications. • CTE classes, dual credit. • Early college high schools. • Extracurricular activities. • Hiring support for special populations. • House Bill 5 graduation with endorsements. • Implementing outside resources – Covey 7 Habits to help students assume more leadership roles and ownership. • Partnerships with industry, support services. • Students being in a classroom where choice exists. • Texas Gateway (lessons). • Very passionate teachers that do a great job.
Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Assistive Teaching – basic computer skills (Word, Excel, typing). • All teachers and administrators trained in positive behavior interventions and supports; improve social, emotional and academic outcomes for ALL. • Connecting advocacy and standardized education as partners – social workers, etc.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engagement of community in school processes.• Enhance choice in student learning.• Lower classroom size or student-to-teacher ratio.• Make sure all training is effective, research-based, and accessible to all equally.• Mandatory teacher training in identifying and remediating dyslexia.• Need to connect what they do in school with real world and why it matters.• Partnership between colleges and high school to better prepare students.• Teach financial literacy and computer literacy.• Train educators in mental health. This was passed in 2013 (SB460) but is not being implemented in most districts.
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